[Kays
N]
13100
LIBRARY
298735

[*From the American Journal of the Medical Sciences, for November*, 1837.]

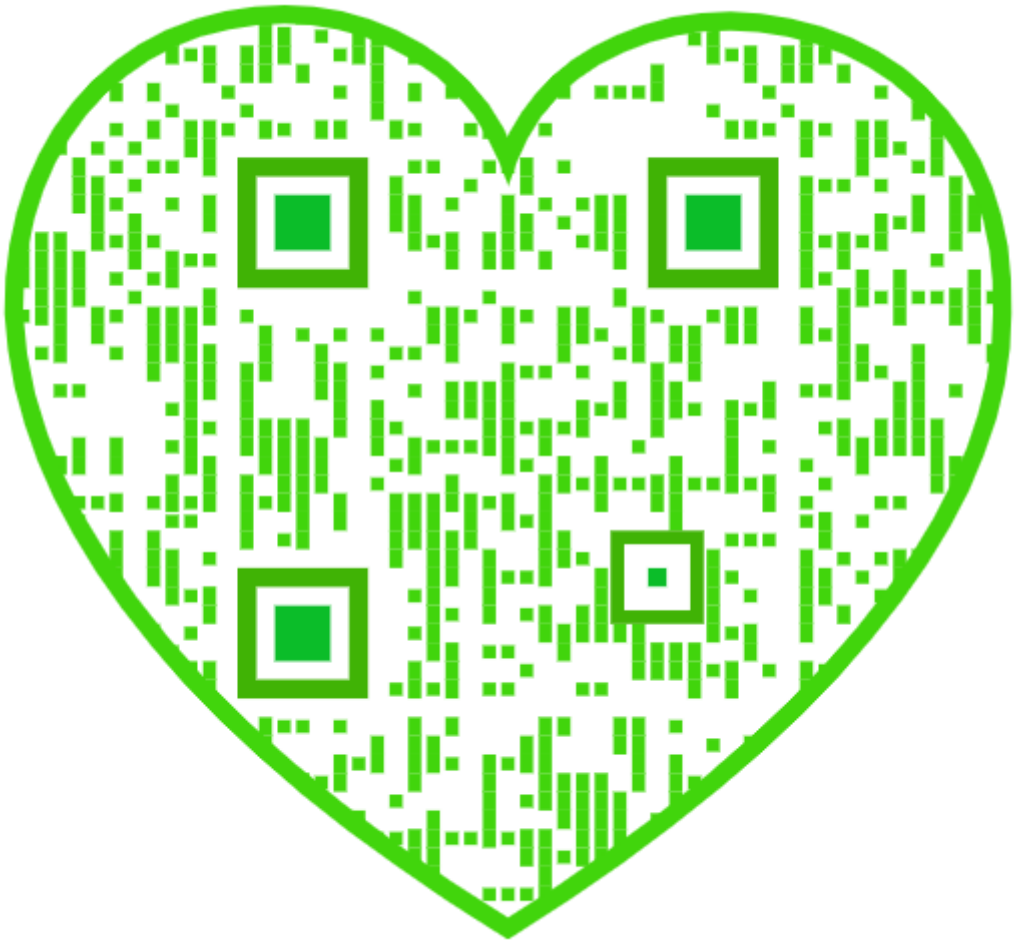
ON ANIMAL MAGNETISM.—By the Editor.

Animal Magnetism is the wonder of the day. The stories current regarding its effects, and sustained by what is deemed credible authority, are of the most miraculous character. It is seriously affirmed that persons, under what is termed "the magnetic influence," are endowed with the power of seeing through numerous opaque envelopes and reading sentences therein enclosed; of predicting future events; of visiting, *in spirit*, distant places, and seeing what is passing there; and with various other faculties, equally extraordinary, and contrary to what has hitherto been deemed the well established laws of nature. The belief in these wonders is said to be almost as general in some parts of New England as that in witchcraft was a century and a half ago; and, as was the case with this last delusion, it is not confined to the ignorant and vulgar, but numbers among its votaries many educated persons and those holding high stations—clergymen, professors in colleges, physicians, and members of the bar and bench. It might be supposed that, before persons of general intelligence could be induced to repose faith in such startling propositions as those we have mentioned, evidence of the most unquestionable character must have been adduced. None such, however, can we find to have been presented; and, in the absence of all such, we must infer that a well devised and ingenious system of jugglery has been practised: adding another to the numerous exemplifications of the fact, that ingenious knavery always finds in the world credulity sufficient to furnish dupes.

We do not mean this disrespectfully. The whole history of the human race is a record of delusions. From the golden calf to the prophet Mathias, have not innumerable delusions prevailed in religion? In medicine, from Hoangti to Hahnemann, have we not had an infinite series of irrational doctrines, and all found votaries; even the last, the most absurd of all? In what art or science, indeed, has not man's mind rioted in extravagances? What hypothesis ever framed has been too ridiculous not to have been received by many as established truth? Mankind have always been too apt to mistake opinions for facts, and the phantoms of their imagination for real existences. There is no subject less understood than that of evidence. A thorough and philosophical treatise on the principles of evidence, is amongst the greatest of desiderata.

Whilst we repudiate the extravagances of animal magnetism, (what is termed *clairvoyance*, for example,) we do not deny that very remarkable phenomena sometimes follow, and appear to result from, the operations of magnetisers. The nature, however, of these phenomena, and the causes by which they are produced, remains yet to be exposed. So far as we have witnessed them, they are analogous to those frequently seen in diseased states of the nervous system, and are chiefly remarkable and excite surprise from being produced under influences not supposed capable of such effects.

It is the duty of a sound philosophy to carefully observe and record all these phenomena, and after a sufficient number have been collected, to analyze them, classify them, and compare them with those exhibited in the various diseases of the nervous system. All this must be done in good faith, and without allowing the mind to be influenced by preconceived opinions. Especially necessary also is it, that in recording what is observed, no terms should be employed predicated upon theory. The words "animal magnetism" should, for the present, at all events, be abandoned, as their use indicates the adoption of an hypothesis —a belief in an invisible, imponderable fluid—the existence of which is entirely suppositious. Above all, we must be careful not to allow ourselves to be duped by charlatans; who, knowing how to take advantage of the moment when we are thrown off our guard by surprise at seeing phenomena produced at a



moment when not expected, challenge our belief to the full extent, in their marvellous powers. Having proved to us the verity of what we may have deemed *improbable*, they would, on the faith of the credit thus gained, have us give credence to what is *impossible*.

Several competent physicians are now investigating the subject, and, we think, in the right spirit. With the better knowledge we now possess of the nervous system, some fruits may be expected from their inquiries. When completed, we hope to be able to present them to our readers.

Having premised so much, we shall now give a brief history of animal magnetism, and an account of the processes to be followed by magnetizers. We derive the former principally from Millingen's Curiosities of Medical Experience, a work with which we propose hereafter to make our readers more fully acquainted—the latter from Hartshorne's translation of Deleuze's Practical Instruction in Animal Magnetism.

"So early as 1462, Pomponatius of Mantua maintained, in his work on incantation, that all the pretended arts of sorcery and witchcraft were the mere results of natural operations; he farther gave it as his opinion, that it was not improbable but that external means, called into action by the soul, might relieve our sufferings; that there, moreover, did exist individuals endowed with salutary properties, and it might therefore easily be conceived that marvellous effects should be produced by the imagination, and by confidence, more especially when they are reciprocal between the patient and the person who assists his recovery; physicians and men of sense being well convinced that if the bones of any animal were substituted for those of a saint, the result would be the same. It need not be added that our author was violently persecuted for this heretical doctrine. Two years after, Agrippa, in Cologne, asserted that the soul inflamed by a fervent imagination could dispense health and disease, not only in the individual himself, but in other bodies. In 1493, Paracelsus expressed himself in the following language: 'All doubt destroys work, and leaves it imperfect in the wise designs of nature. It is from faith that imagination draws its strength. It is by faith that it becomes complete and realised. He who believeth in nature will obtain from nature to the extent of his faith. Let the object of this faith be real or imaginary, you nevertheless reap similar results, and hence the cause of superstition.'

"Cardanus, Bacon, Van Helmont pursued this study; and the latter physician, having cured several cases by magnetism, was considered a sorcerer, and seized by the Inquisition. Magnetism, he observed, 'is a universal agent, and only novel in its appellation, and paradoxical to those who ridicule everything they do not comprehend, or attribute to Satan what they cannot understand. The name of magnetism is given to that occult influence which bodies possess on each other at various distances, either by attraction or by impulsion. The means or the vehicle of this influence is an ethereal spirit, pure, vital, (*magnale magnum,*) which penetrates all matter, and agitates the mass of the universe. This spirit is the moderator of the world, and establishes a correspondence between its several parts and the powers with which it is endowed. We can attach to a body the virtues that we possess, communicate to it certain properties, and use it as the intermediate means to operate salutary effects. I have hitherto withheld the revelation of this great mystery. There exists in man a certain energy, which can act beyond his own person according to his will or his imagination, and impart virtues and exercise a durable influence even in distant objects. Will is the first of powers.' Van Helmont fully admitted the wonderful faculties that somnambulism seemed to develope, and informs us that it was chiefly during his sleep that he was inspired with his doctrines. One might have imagined that these philosophic researches would have put an effectual stop to the progress of superstition, or rather of persecution; yet their promulgation could not save Urbain Grandier, and many supposed sorcerers, from a barbarous death.

"It was in the beginning of the eighteenth century that various experiments were made with the loadstone in researches regarding electricity. In 1754, Lenoble had constructed magnets that could be used with facility in the treatment of various diseases. In 1774, Father Hell, a Jesuit and professor of astronomy at Vienna, having cured himself of a severe rheumatism by magnetism, related the result of his experiments to Mesmer. This physician was immediately struck with observations that illustrated his own theories respecting planetary influence.

He forthwith proceeded to procure magnets of every form and description for the gratuitous treatment of all those that consulted him; and, while he widely diffused his doctrines, he sent his magnets in every direction to aid the experimental pursuits of others, and thus expressed himself on the subject in a memoir published in 1779: 'I had maintained that the heavenly spheres possessed a direct power on all the constituent principles of animated bodies, particularly on the *nervous system*, by the agency of an all-penetrating fluid. I determined this action by the INTENSION and the REMISSION of the properties of matter and organized bodies, such as gravity, cohesion, elasticity, irritability, electricity. I supported this doctrine by various examples of periodical revolutions; and I named that property of the animal matter, which renders it susceptible to the action of celestial and earthly bodies, ANIMAL MAGNETISM. A farther consideration of the subject led me to the conviction that there does exist in nature a universal principle, which, independent of ourselves, performs all that we vaguely attribute to nature or to art.'

"Mesmer, as might have been foreseen, became the subject of persecution and of ridicule, and withdrew to Switzerland and Suabia. It was there that he met with a certain Gassner of Braz, who, having fancied that an exoreism had relieved him from a long and painful malady, took it into his head to exorcise others. He considered the greater part of the disorders to which flesh is heir as the work of the Devil, and he counteracted his baneful influence in the name of our SAVIOUR: He divided these diabolical visitations into *possessions*, *obsessions*, and *circumsessions;* the latter being trifling invasions. For the purpose of ascertaining whether his patients laboured under natural or infernal ailments, he conjured Satan to declare the truth. If, after three solemn interpellations, and signs of the cross, the Devil did not answer, the disorder was considered as coming within the province of medicine; but if, on the contrary, the patient fell into convulsions, Gassner drew forth his stole and crucifix, and in the name of the Redeemer commenced rubbing and pinching, sometimes in the most indecorous manner, when females were submitted to his manipulations. When his attempts failed, he accused the patient of want of faith or of the commission of some deadly sin, which baffled his endeavours. His fame became so universal that the Bishop of Ratisbon sent for him, and he exercised his art under his auspices; at one period the town was so crowded with his patients, that ten thousand of them were obliged to encamp without the walls. It appears that this adventurer had the power of acting upon the pulse, and could increase or retard it, render it regular or intermittent, and was even reported to paralyse limbs and produce tears or laughter at will. It is scarcely credible, yet the celebrated De Haen, one of the most distinguished and learned practitioners in Germany, not only believed in the power of this Gassner, but actually attributed it to a paction with the Devil.

"Mesmer was not so credulous, and explained the miraculous cures of Gassner by the doctrines of the animal magnetism which he advocated. From Suabia he returned to Vienna, whence he was expelled as a quack; and in 1778 arrived in Paris, a capital that had patronised Cagliostro and St. Germain, and was ever ready to be deceived by ingenious empiricism. In 1779 he published a paper on the subject, in which he maintained twenty-seven propositions to establish his supposed influence between the celestial bodies, the earth, and animated matter, produced by a fluid universal, subtile, susceptible of receiving, transmitting, and communicating its impressions, on mechanical principles until then unknown, and producing alternate effects of flux and reflux. This powerful agent, he said, acted chiefly on the nervous system. The human body, moreover, according to his notions, possessed properties analogous to the loadstone, and presenting an opposed polarity, subject to various modifications, which either strengthened or weakened it. The action of animal magnetism, according to him, was not confined to animal matter, but could be equally communicated to inanimate bodies at various distances. Mirrors could reflect and increase its power like the rays of light, and sound could propagate and increase it. This magnetic property, he farther stated, could be accumulated, concentrated, and transported at pleasure, although there did exist animated bodies possessed of properties so opposite as to render this powerful agent inefficient. He found that the loadstone was susceptible of animal magnetism, and of its opposite virtues, without any apparent influence on its power over iron and the needle; whence he concluded that there existed a wide difference between animal and mineral magnetism.

"Mesmer soon found a warm advocate of his doctrines in a Dr. D'Eslon, and animal magnetism became in fashionable vogue. Not only were men and ani-

mals subjected to their experiments, but this wondrous influence was communicated to trees and plants, and the celebrated elm-tree of Beaugency was magnetised by the Marquis de Puységur and his brother; while the enthusiastic D'Eslon absolutely went knocking from door to door to procure patients. Breteuil, who was then one of the ministers, offered Mesmer a yearly pension of thirty thousand francs, with a sum of three hundred thousand francs in cash, with the decoration of St. Michael, if he would consent to reveal the mysteries of his science to the medical faculty. This tempting offer our magnetiser indignantly rejected, and a secret society was instituted under the name of the Lodge and Order of Harmony. The charms and the power of youth and music were not neglected as auxiliaries to propagate the fashionable doctrine. Young men of elegant manners and athletic form were initiated in the practice of magnetising, and the *salons* of Paris consecrated to this worship (for such it might have been termed) were crowded with the most fascinating women that the gay metropolis of France could produce. Most of these females, empassioned by nervous excitability, as loose in their morals as to outward appearance they were fervent in their devotions, abandoned themselves without reserve to the delightful sensations that magnetism and its surrounding machinery were said to afford. In their ecstacies, their hysteric attacks, their spasms, Mesmer, the high-priest, fancifully dressed, but in the height of fashion, with his youthful acolytes, endeavoured to soothe and calm the agitation of their enchanting patients by all the means that Mesmerism could devise.

"It soon became pretty evident that these phenomena were solely to be attributed to the influence of imagination; and Doppet, one of the most ardent disciples of the new creed, frankly avowed that 'those who were initiated in the secrets of Mesmer entertained more doubts on the subject than those who were in thorough ignorance.' Notwithstanding this evidence brought forward against Mesmer's fascinating practice, he was warmly enlogised even by high churchmen; and Hervier, a doctor of Sorbonne, did not hesitate to assert that the golden age was on the return; that man would be endowed with fresh vigour, live for the space of five generations, and only succumb to the exhaustion of age; that all the animal kingdom would enjoy a similar blessing; while magnetised trees would yield more abundant and delicious fruits. This belief of the good ecclesiastic arose, according to his own assertion, from his having been cured of some cruel disorder by magnetism, while all his intimate acquaintances insisted that he had never ceased to enjoy perfect health.

"Such were the circumstances that attended the introduction of animal magnetism, which to this day is defended and maintained by ardent proselytes. Sound philosophy can only attribute its wonderful phenomena, many of which cannot be denied, to the influence of the imagination, and the all-powerful deceptive agency of faith. It is an incontrovertible fact that the nervous system may be so worked upon, thrown by various secret and physical means into such a morbid condition, that results bordering upon the miraculous in the eyes of the credulous may be easily obtained. Every circumstance that appears to differ from the usual course of nature is deemed miraculous by the ignorant; and the Greek proverb θαύματα μωροῖς, plainly maintains that miracles are only for the simple. In fact, who are the persons who in our times cry out 'miracle,' but weak and timid men, worn out by excesses or age, labouring under the influence of terror; silly old women, who have not the power of reasoning; or nervous and enthusiastic females, who seek for some saving clauses in a pact between vice and virtue, depravity and religion.

"All the wonders of the creation are miraculous, if we are to consider as such those phenomena that are, and most probably will ever remain, beyond our humble and miserable comprehension."

The doctrine of Animal Magnetism has several times been brought before the Academy of Medicine of France. In 1827, a committee of eleven members were appointed by this body to examine the subject. This committee consisted of MM. Bourdois de la Mothe, Fouquier, Guénean de Mussy, Guersent, Husson, Itard, Leroux, Marc, Thillaye, Double and Magendie, all names well known to science. Of these gentlemen, the two last declined to act. A report drawn out by M. Husson was made in 1831, which gave rise to much discussion.

This subject was again incidentally brought before the Academy in January

last, and on the 14th February, at the request of M. Berna, a new committee was appointed to which he promised to exhibit the phenomena of Animal Magnetism. This committee consisted of MM. Bouillaud, Emery, Oudet, Roux, Cloquet, Dubois d'Amiens, Cornac, Pelletier, and Caventou. A report written by M. Dubois d'Amiens was made from this committee in August last, minutely detailing their proceedings.

This report is too long for us to give at present, but their final conclusion was, that M. Berna had deceived himself when he promised to exhibit to a committee of the Academy *conclusive* facts, and when he affirmed that these facts were of a character to throw light on Physiology and Therapeutics. These facts, say the committee, were any thing but conclusive in favour of the doctrine of Animal Magnetism; and that they had nothing in common either with Physiology or Therapeutics.

The following are the processes to be employed by magnetisers, as given by Deleuze.

"Cause your patient to sit down in the easiest position possible, and place yourself before him, on a seat a little more elevated, so that his knees may be between yours, and your feet by the side of his. Demand of him in the first place that he give himself up entirely, that he think of nothing, that he do not trouble himself by examining the effects which he experiences, that he banish all fear, and indulge hope, and that he be not disquieted or discouraged if the action of magnetism produces in him temporary pains.

"After you have brought yourself to a state of self-collectedness, take his thumbs between your two fingers, so that the inside of your thumbs may touch the inside of his. Remain in this situation five minutes, or until you perceive there is an equal degree of heat between your thumbs and his: that being done, you will withdraw your hands, removing them to the right and left, and waving them so that the interior surface be turned outwards, and raise them to his head; then place them upon his two shoulders, leaving them there about a minute; you will then draw them along the arm to the extremity of the fingers, touching lightly. You will repeat this *pass** five or six times, always turning your hands and sweeping them off a little, before reascending: you will then place your hands upon the head, hold them there a moment, and bring them down before the face, at the distance of one or two inches, as far as the pit of the stomach: there you will let them remain about two minutes, passing the thumb along the pit of the stomach, and the other fingers down the sides. Then descend slowly along the body as far as the knees, or farther; and, if you can conveniently, as far as the ends of the feet. You may repeat the same processes during the greater part of the sitting. You may sometimes draw nearer to the patient so as to place your hands behind his shoulders, descending slowly along the spine, thence to the hips, and along the thighs as far as the knees, or to the feet. After the first passes you may dispense with putting your hands upon the head, and make the succeeding passes along the arms, beginning at the shoulder; or along the body commencing at the stomach.

"When you wish to put an end to the sitting, take care to draw towards the extremity of the hands, and towards the extremity of the feet, prolonging your passes beyond these extremities, and shaking your fingers each time. Finally, make several passes transversely before the face, and also before the breast, at the distance of three or four inches: these passes are made by presenting the two hands together and briskly drawing them from each other, as if to carry off the superabundance of fluid with which the patient may be charged. You see that it is essential to magnetize, always descending from the head to the extremities, and never mounting from the extremities to the head. It is on this account that we turn the hands obliquely when they are raised again from the feet to the head. The descending passes are magnetic, that is, they are accompanied with the intention of magnetizing. The ascending movements are not. Many magnetizers shake their fingers slightly after each pass. This method, which is never

* I employ here the word pass, which is common to all magnetizers: it signifies all the movements made by the hand in *passing* over the body, whether by slightly touching, or at a distance.

injurious, is in certain cases advantageous, and for this reason it is good to get in the habit of doing it.

"Although you may have at the close of the sitting taken care to spread the fluid over all the surface of the body, it is proper, in finishing, to make several passes along the legs from the knees to the end of the feet. These passes free the head. To make them more conveniently, place yourself on your knees in front of the person whom you are magnetizing.

"I think it proper to distinguish the passes that are made without touching, from those which are made with the touch, not only with the ends of the fingers, but with all the extent of the hand, employing at the same time a slight pressure. I give to these last the name of *magnetic frictions:* they are often made use of to act better upon the arms, the legs, and the back, along the vertebral column. This manner of magnetizing by longitudinal passes, directing the fluid from the head to the extremities, without fixing upon any part in preference to others, is called *magnetizing by the long pass,* (magnétiser à grands courans.) It is more or less proper in all cases, and it is requisite to employ it in the first sitting, when there is no special reason for using any other. The fluid is thus distributed into all the organs, and it accumulates naturally in those which have need of it. Besides the passes made at a short distance, others are made, just before finishing, at the distance of two or three feet. They generally produce a calm, refreshing, and pleasurable sensation.

"There is one more process by which it is very advantageous to terminate the sitting. It consists in placing one's-self by the side of the patient, as he stands up, and, at the distance of a foot, making with both hands, one before the body and the other behind, seven or eight passes, commencing above the head and descending to the floor, along which the hands are spread apart. This process frees the head, re-establishes the equilibrium, and imparts strength.

"When the magnetizer acts upon the patient, they are said *to be in communication,* (rapport.) That is to say, we mean by the word *communication,* a peculiar and indueed condition, which causes the magnetizer to exert an influence upon the patient, there being between them a communication of the vital principle.

"This communication is sometimes established very soon, and sometimes after a long trial. This depends upon the moral and physical conditions of the two individuals. It is rare not to have it established at the first sitting. Experienced magnetizers generally perceive it in themselves when this takes place.

"When once the communication is well established, the action is renewed in the succeeding sittings, at the instant of beginning to magnetize. Then if you wish to act upon the breast, the stomach, or the abdomen, there is no utility in touching, provided it is not found more convenient. Ordinarily magnetism acts as well and even better in the interior of the body, at the distance of one or two inches, than by the touch. It is enough at the commencement of the sitting to take the thumbs a moment. Sometimes it is neecssary to magnetize at the distance of several feet. Magnetism at a distance is more soothing, and some nervous persons cannot bear any other.

"In making the passes it is unneeessary to employ any greater muscular force than what is required to lift the hand and prevent it from falling. The movements should be easy and not too rapid. A pass from the head to the feet may take about half a minute. The fingers ought to be a little separated from each other, and slightly bent, so that the ends of the fingers be directed towards the person magnetized.

"It is by the ends of the fingers, and especially by the thumbs, that the fluid escapes with the most activity. For this reason it is, we take the thumbs of the patient in the first place, and hold them whenever we are at rest. This process generally suffices to establish the communication; to strengthen which there is also one other process. It consists in placing your ten fingers against those of the patient, so that the inside of your hands are brought near to the inside of his; and the fleshy part of your fingers touch the fleshy part of his, the nails being outwards. The fluid seems to flow less copiously from the back of the hands than from the inside; and this is one of the reasons for turning the hands in raising them, without carrying them off too far from the body.

"The processes I have now indicated, are the most regular and advantageous for magnetism by the long pass, but it is far from being always proper, or even possible to employ them. When a man magnetizes a woman, even if it were his sister, it might not be proper to place himself before her in the manner described;

and also when a patient is obliged to keep his bed, it would be impossible to make him sit, in order to sit in front of him.

"In the first case, you can place yourself by the side of the person whom you wish to magnetize. First, take the thumbs, and, the better to establish the communication, place one hand upon the stomach, and the other upon the back, then lower the two hands opposite to each other, one down the back and the other at a distance down the forepart of the body; one hand descending to the feet. You may magnetize the two arms, one after the other, with one hand only.

"In case the patient cannot raise himself, take your station near his bed in the most convenient manner; take his thumbs, make several passes along the arms, and, if he can support himself upright, several along the back; then, not to fatigue yourself, use only one hand, placing it upon the stomach, and making longitudinal passes, at first slightly touching through the clothes, then at a distance. You can hold one hand fixed upon the knees or upon the feet, while the other is in motion. Finish by passes along the legs, and by transversal passes before the head, the breast, and the stomach, to scatter the superabundant fluid. When the communication is established, one can magnetize very well by placing himself at the foot of the patient's bed, and in front of him; then directing at that distance both hands from the head to the feet, dashing them aside after each pass so as not to conduct the fluid to himself. I have produced somnambulism by this process, without establishing the communication by touching.

"This is what I have to say about magnetism by the long pass, with which it is always proper to commence, and to which a person may confine himself until he has a reason for employing other processes."

—

Convulsionists of Saint Médard.—The horrors which the famous convulsionists of Paris and other parts of France underwent, not only voluntarily but at their most earnest prayer and solicitation, has been often alluded to in connexion with animal magnetism, and as those events very strikingly illustrate the effects of enthusiasm in rendering its victims insensible to external agents, we extract the following narrative of them from Millingen's *Curiosities of Medical Experience.*

"This work of miracles, as it was called, was first performed by a priest of the name of Paris, in 1724, and, strange to say, the aberration continued for upwards of twelve years. Paris having departed this life in the odour of sanctity, (at least according to the conviction of the Jansenists, who had opposed with no little violence the famous bull *Unigenitus,*) the Appellants, for such they thought proper to denominate their sect, appealed to the remains of their beatified companion to operate miracles in support of their common cause. The Appellants were absurdly persecuted, therefore miracles became manifestations easy to obtain. Having succeeded in finding credulous dupes, the next step was to work their credulity into a useful state of enthusiasm. They therefore summoned all the sick, lame, and halt, of their sectarians to repair to the tomb of St. Paris for radical relief. Crowds were soon collected round his blessed sepulchre. It is now generally supposed that animal magnetism was resorted to in these curative operations, or rather religious ceremonies. Had not the means thus employed for the purpose been recorded and authenticated by the most irrefragable authorities, the sceptic might long pause before he would yield them credence.

"The patient (a female) was stretched on the ground, and the stoutest men that could be found were directed to trample with all their might and main upon her body; kicking the chest and stomach, and attempting to tread down the ribs with their heels. So violent were these exertions, that it is related a hunchbacked girl was thus kicked and trampled into a goodly shape.

"The next exercise was what they called the *plank*, and consisted in laying a deal board on the patient while extended upon the back, and then getting as many athletic men as could stand upon it, to press the body down; and in this endeavour they seldom showed sufficient energy to satisfy the supposed sufferer, who was constantly calling for more pressure.

"Next came the experiment of the *pebble*, a diminutive name they were pleased to give to a paving-stone weighing two-and-twenty pounds, which was discharged by the operator upon the patient's stomach and bosom, from as great a height as he could well raise the weighty body. This terrific blow was frequently inflicted upwards of a hundred times, and with such violence, that the house and

the furniture of the room, vibrated under the concussion, while the astonished by-standers were terrified by the hollow sound re-echoed by the enthusiast at every blow.

"Carre de Montgeron affirms that the *pebble* was not found sufficiently powerful, and the operator was obliged in one case to procure an iron fire-dog, (*chenet,*) weighing about thirty pounds, which was discharged as violently as possible on the pit of the patient's stomach at least a hundred times. This instrument having for the sake of curiosity been hurled against a wall, brought part of it down at the twenty-fifth blow. The operator further states, that he had commenced, according to the usual practice, by inflicting moderate blows, until he was induced by her lamentable entreaties to redouble his vigour, but all to no purpose; his strength was unavailing, and he was obliged to employ a more athletic surgeon, who fell to work with such energy that he shook the whole house. The Convulsionist, who was of the gentle sex, would not allow sixty blows she had received from her first doctor to be included in the calculation of the dose, but insisted upon having her whole hundred as prescribed. It further appears, that at each stroke the delighted enthusiast would exclaim in ecstacy, "Oh, how nice!" "Oh, how it does me good!" "Oh, dear brother hit away—again—again!" For be it known, these operators were called by the affectionate name of brothers, whose claims to fraternal affection were in the ratio of the weight of their kindness towards the sisterhood.

"One of these young ladies, who was not easily satisfied, wanted to try her own skill, and jumped with impunity into the fire, an exploit which obtained her the glorious epithet of Sister Salamander. The names that these amiable devotees gave to each other were somewhat curious. They all strove to imitate the whining and wheedling of spoiled children, or petted infants; one was called *L'Imbécille*, another *L'Aboyeuse*, a third *La Niscttc*, and they used to beg and cry for barley-sugar and cakes; barley-sugar signified a stick big enough to fell an ox, and cakes meant paving-stones. The excesses of these maniacs were at last carried to so fearful an extent, and their religious ceremonies were so debased by obscenities, that the police was obliged to interfere, and forbid these detestable practices; hence it was affirmed that the following somewhat impious notice was suspended over the church-door:

De par le Roi, défence à Dieu,
De faire miracle en ce lieu.

"These lunatics, for such they must be considered, were not impostors. They had been worked to this degraded state by the plastic power of superstition, and implicit reliance was placed in their assertions; for, as Pascal said, "we must believe people who are ready to have their throats cut." Whether the Jansenist priests belonged to the same class, I leave to the reader to decide.

"Cabanis, in his interesting work, 'Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l'Homme,' offers the following remarks on this most curious subject: 'Sensibility may be considered in the light of a fluid the quantity of which is determined, and which, when carried to certain channels in greater proportions than to others, must of course be diminished in the latter ones. This is evident in all violent affections but more especially in those ecstacies where the brain and other sympathetic organs are possessed of the highest degree of energetic action, while the faculty of feeling and of motion—in short, the vital powers—seem to have fled from the other parts of the system. In this violent state fanatics have received with impunity severe wounds, which, if inflicted in a healthy condition, would have proved fatal or most dangerous; for the danger that results from the violent action of external agents on our organs depends on their sensibility, and we daily see poisons, which would be deleterious to a healthy man, innocuous in a state of illness. It was by availing themselves of this physical disposition that impostors of every description and of every country operated most of their miracles; and it was by these means that the Convulsionists of St. Médard amazed weak imaginations with the blows they received from swords and hatchets, and which in their ascetic language they called *consolations*. This was the magic wand with which Mesmer overcame habitual sufferings, by giving a fresh direction to the attention, and establishing in constitutions possessed of great mobility a sense of action to which they had been unaccustomed. It was thus also that the *Illuminati* of France and Germany succeeded in destroying external sensations amongst their adepts, depriving them in fact of their relative existence.'"